United Nations

Daily Highlights

Department of Public Information • Central News Section • New York

Prepared by Central News

DH/1126
23 April 1992

THURSDAY HIGHLIGHTS

+ Secretary-General expresses concern about deteriorating security situation in northern and southern part of Somalia; recommends to Security Council that it establish United Nations Operation in Somalia and call for general cease-fire throughout the country to allow for expanded humanitarian assistance.

+ Secretary-General, continuing his visit to India, holds talks with Indian Prime Minister on developments in Afghanistan, peace-keeping operations in Cambodia and Yugoslavia, among other things.

+ Libya requests legal opinion on United States' decision to reduce diplomatic personnel at Mission, under Security Council sanctions resolution 748 (1992).

+ World Commission on Environment and Development -- known as Brundtland Commission -- begins three-day session in London in preparation for Rio Earth Summit.

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Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali has recommended to the Security Council that it establish a mission in Somalia -- to be known as United Nations Operation in Somalia (UNOSOM) -- for an initial period of six months.

In a report to the Council, dated 21 April, the Secretary-General said such a mission would consist of United Nations observers to monitor the 3 March cease-fire agreed upon by Interim President Mohamed and General Aidid and of a security force to protect its personnel as well as safeguarding humanitarian activities in an around Mogadishu.

The Secretary-General said in his report that the cease-fire in Mogadishu had created a new and positive political climate, leading the two factions to meet face to face for the first time, on 12 April, to discuss the formation of a joint committee for relief assistance, under the chairmanship of Jan Eliasson, Under-Secretary-General for Humanitarian Affairs and Coordinator for Humanitarian Assistance.

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Despite the favourable developments in the Somali capital, the Secretary-General expressed concern about the increased fighting and the deteriorating security situation in the northern and southern part of the country. Taking these developments into account, he recommended that the Security Council call for a general cease-fire throughout the country. In addition to helping to bring an end to the fighting in different parts of the country, such action by the Council would create a situation conducive to the convening of a conference on national reconciliation and unity in Somalia, he said.

In his report, Mr. Boutros-Ghali further said that he intended to appoint a Special Representative for Somalia to assist him in the consultations for the convening of a conference on national reconciliation and unity in Somalia.

The Secretary-General's recommendation to set up UNOSOM follows the dispatch last month to the Somali capital of a technical team, led by Under-Secretary-General for Political Affairs James O.C. Jonah, and composed of representatives of United Nations and non-governmental agencies operating in Somalia. The team held discussions with the parties in an effort to reach agreement on "unimpeded delivery of humanitarian assistance" to the population in Mogadishu.

At United Nations Headquarters today, Under Secretary-General for Political Affairs James O.C. Jonah briefed correspondents on the report, saying it represented a further stage in the effort of the Secretary-General to assist the people of Somalia "to bring about tranquility in that troubled country". While the Secretary-General welcomed the fact that the ceasefire had been holding for a very long time, he also drew attention to the fact that there were difficulties in other parts of in Somalia, Mr. Jonah stressed.

He also told the press that the Secretary-General has urged the World Food Programme (WFP) to begin shipments of food to Mogadishu as soon as possible. The WFP had agreed to deliver 5,000 tonnes of food by this weekend, and if successful, another 12,000 tonnes of food would follow.

The Council held consultations this afternoon on the Secretary-General's report and was expected to meet tomorrow in a formal meeting to take action on the report.

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Continuing his visit to India, Secretary-General Boutros Boutros-Ghali met today with Prime Minister P.V. Narasimha Rao, with whom he discussed various international matters, including the developments in Afghanistan, United Nations peace-keeping missions in Cambodia and Yugoslavia, the future of the Non-Aligned Movement and the forthcoming Earth Summit in Rio in June. They also discussed the role of the United Nations on various economic and social issues. Following their talks, the Prime Minister of India hosted a dinner in honour of the Secretary-General.

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The Secretary-General also met with Vice President Shanker Dayal Sharma, and the President of India, Mr. R. Venkataraman. He then addressed United Nations and specialized agencies staff and had a separate meeting with the heads of various United Nations and specialized agencies offices in New Delhi.

The Secretary-General leaves New Delhi for Islamabad tomorrow, 24 April, where he will receive a briefing by his Personal Representative for Afghanistan and Pakistan, Benon Sevan. Mr. Sevan has held meetings with the Pakistani Prime Minister and Foreign Minister.

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Charging that the United States, as host country, had reduced Libyan diplomatic personnel by 25 per cent, the representative of Libya requested a legal opinion on the recent Security Council resolution imposing sanctions on his country, which, he said, abrogated articles of the Headquarters Agreement. That request was made this morning, as the Committee on Relations with the Host Country held its first meeting of the year.

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The representative of France said Council Resolution 748 (1992) contained binding provisions which mandated that States reduce the number of Libyan diplomatic personnel and, according to the Charter, prevailed over the Headquarters Agreement. The representative of the United States said his country had requested that the Libyan mission reduce its staff by three in accordance with the relevant provisions of that resolution.

Other issues discussed this morning related to staff limitations and travel restrictions imposed by the host country, as well as financial indebtedness of diplomatic personnel and staff.

The Under-Secretary-General for Legal Affairs and United Nations Legal Council, Carl-August Fleischhauer, said the problem of indebtedness risked jeopardizing some of the priviledges and immunities enjoyed by diplomats, particularly those related to inviolability. He appealed to all parties to take steps to safeguard the importance principle of inviolability and immunity, while at the same time removing the grounds for allegations of abuse.

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The World Commission on Environment and Development -- better known as the Brundtland Commission -- reconvened in London yesterday in its first session since producing a 1987 report which coined the term "sustainable development" and called on the United Nations to organize a global conference to find ways of maintaining "human progress within the guidelines of human needs and natural laws".

The Prime Minister of Norway, Gro Harlem Brundtland, opened the session calling attention to the fact that in six weeks the Rio de Janeiro Earth

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Summit would consider "the most fundamental issue facing the world community today: how to reconcile human activities with the laws of nature. She said it was time to end an era of procrastination and half-measures and to enter a period of firm action. It would amount to an abdication of duty without parallel, she said, if the opportunity created by UNCED were lost, she said.

Echoing Mrs. Bruntland's remarks, Britain's Prince Charles urged that a "sensible and far-sighted agenda for action" at the Rio de Janeiro Summit in June be worked out, in order that the future survival of our grandchildren and great-grandchildren is not sacrificed for short-term gain.

During its three-day session, the Commission will review developments since it submitted its report entitled Our Common Future to the General Assembly. The report was a significant factor in the Assembly's 1989 decision to hold the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), now scheduled for Rio de Janeiro from 3 to 14 June.

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